



The Maria Montessori Training Organisation
trading as
The Maria Montessori Institute

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Policy

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Introduction

(To be read in conjunction with Maria Montessori Institute’s “Sex & Relationship Education Policy”, “Personal, Social & Health Education and Citizenship Policy” and “Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.”)

The Maria Montessori School is aware that the DoE have made Relationship Education compulsory in all primary schools as well as Health Education. We are clear that the parents are the prime educators for children on many of these matters and that school can complement and reinforce these principles, building on each child’s knowledge. This is done sensitively with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of children and parents, whilst always with the aim of providing children with age appropriate and developmentally appropriate content, together with the knowledge they need of the law.

The Maria Montessori School will continue to seek to support the personal development and pastoral needs of each and every child. We will put into place the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendship, in all contexts, including online. This will be in parallel with the essential understanding of how to be healthy.

Teaching about mental wellbeing is central to all that we deliver, being aware of the increasing challenges that children are facing in today’s world, in particular the risk of feeling lonely. We will give them the knowledge and capability to take care of themselves and know how to reach out for support if the need arises. We will foster the attitudes and resilience needed to support children in being happy, successful and contributing members of the society in which they find themselves. We will continue to foster perseverance in the face of adversity with the reward being that of their own satisfaction in achieving a goal or goals. We hope to change children from an ‘I can’t do it’ mindset to one of ‘I can’.

The aim of the Maria Montessori School is to aid development of attributes such as kindness, integrity, generosity and honesty alongside perseverance and resilience. We want to enable children to make informed decisions about their well-being, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy. Children will be able to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts.

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from sex education but not Relationships or Health Education. In our school we celebrate the varied beliefs and faiths that each child and family holds, as well as complying with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010 in which religion and belief are some of the protected characteristics. We also reflect the law in our teachings (including the Equality Act 2010) as it applies to relationships, so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider implications of decisions that children might make. The Maria Montessori School pays regard to the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate against children or their families because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation. We also



make mindful readjustments to alleviate disadvantage and pay heed to the SEND Code of Practice when planning these subjects. Our School will foster healthy and respectful peer to peer communication and behaviour between all children and provide an environment which challenges perceived limits on children based on their gender or any other characteristic. Our staff model positive behaviour, at all times, (refer to our Behaviour Policy and Staff Code of Conduct) and are alert to issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take action to build a culture where these are not tolerated and instead tackled in a positive way. We expect our children to understand that respect and equality should be given to all people whatever their sexual orientation or gender reassignment.

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from Sex Education (but not Relationship Education or Healthy Living Education), they can request to do so through the Head of School, who will in return grant their application, other than that which is part of the science curriculum, for example, the life cycle of animals.

Definition:

In the Maria Montessori School, the focus of our Relationship Education is to understand what a relationship is, what friendship is, what family means and who are the people that can support them. From the very first day children are taught how to take turns, how to treat each other with kindness, consideration and respect, the importance of honesty and truthfulness, permission seeking and giving, and the concept of personal privacy. Establishing personal space and boundaries, showing respect and understanding the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical and other contact- these are the forerunners of teaching about consent which we begin to show during Grace & Courtesy groups as well as role modelling. Respect for others, in terms of understanding one's own and others' boundaries in both work and play, in negotiations about space, materials, books and so on is also shown through Grace & Courtesy groups as well as role modelling.

From the beginning we will talk about the features of healthy friendships, family relationships and other relationships which young children are likely to encounter. We hope in this way children will be enabled to form an understanding of what constitutes both a positive and a less positive relationship. These principles apply online too especially as by the end of the Elementary children will already be using the internet. Discussions around families should take into account that all families are different and can be composed of many different, equally positive relationships. In the Children's House we introduce this concept with the book 'We are Family', by Patricia Hegarty as well as many others.

By offering the opportunities to enable a child to cultivate their own individual character within a mixed age community we encourage empathy, perseverance, resilience and confidence alongside an understanding of the importance of self-respect and self-worth. Children are in a position to develop attributes such as honesty, integrity, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness and a sense of justice. All these virtues are embedded in the Montessori curriculum and are the basis of our school ethos.



Through books and open ended conversation, we approach positive and emotional wellbeing, including how friendships can support mental wellbeing. We also make children aware of how to recognise and report abuse which, in the Maria Montessori School, is being able to understand boundaries and privacy, understanding that that each child has the rights over their own body. This should include understanding boundaries in friendships with peers and also in families and with others, in all contexts, including online. It is made clear that it is never the fault of the child who is abused. Please refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2022.

By the end of a child's time in the Maria Montessori School children should know:

Families and people who care for me

- that families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability
- the characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives
- that others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care
- that stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up
- that marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong
- how to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed

Marriage in England and Wales is available to both opposite sex and same sex couples. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 extended marriage to same sex couples in England and Wales. The ceremony through which a couple get married may be civil or religious.

Caring friendships

- how important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends
- the characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties
- that healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded
- that most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right
- how to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed



Respectful relationships

- the importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs
- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships
- the conventions of courtesy and manners
- the importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness
- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority
- about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help
- what a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive
- the importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults
- the importance of understanding the concept of 'consent' and being able to voice that.

Online relationships

- that people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not
- that the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous
- the rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them
- how to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met
- how information and data is shared and used online
- the importance of the concept of 'consent' and being able to both voice that choice and stand by it in the face of a tsunami of differing opinions – consent and resilience are crucial skills to arm the children with.

Being safe

- what sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context)
- about the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe
- that each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact



- how to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know
- how to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult
- how to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard,
- how to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so
- where to get advice, for example family, school or other sources

Managing difficult questions

Children will often ask their teachers or other adults questions pertaining to sex or sexuality which go beyond what is set out for Relationships Education. The School's policy covers how the School handles such questions. Given ease of access to the internet, children whose questions go unanswered may turn to inappropriate sources of information.

Meeting these objectives will require a graduated, age-appropriate programme of Relationships Education. Children of the same age may be developmentally at different stages, leading to differing types of questions or behaviours. Our approach should take account of these differences (including when they are due to specific special educational needs or disabilities) and the potential for discussion on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. We should consider what is appropriate and inappropriate in a group setting, as teachers may require support and training in answering questions that are better not dealt with in front of a whole class.

Sex education (Elementary)

The Relationships Education, RSE, and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 have made Relationships Education compulsory in all primary schools. Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools and the content set out here therefore focuses on Relationships Education.

The content set out in this policy covers everything that the school should teach about relationships and health, including puberty. The Montessori curriculum for science also includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. It will be for the Elementary teachers to determine whether they need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of their children.

****Please see our Sex and Relationship Education Policy as well as our Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship Policy**

It is important that the transition phase before moving to secondary school supports children's' ongoing emotional and physical development effectively. Therefore, we must deliver a sex education programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of the pupils. It should ensure that all children are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings, and – drawing on



knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the Montessori curriculum for science - how a baby is conceived and born.

As well as consulting parents more generally about the school's overall policy, our school should consult parents before the final year of primary school about the detailed content of what will be taught. This process should include offering parents support in talking to their children about sex education and how to link this with what is being taught in school. Meeting these objectives will require a graduated, age-appropriate programme of sex education. Teaching needs to take account of the developmental differences of children.

Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing

The aim of teaching children about physical health and mental wellbeing is to give them the information that they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing. It should enable them to recognise what is normal and what is an issue in themselves and others and, when issues arise, know how to seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.

Physical health and mental wellbeing are interlinked, and it is important that children understand that good physical health contributes to good mental wellbeing, and vice versa. It is important for us to promote children's self-control and ability to self-regulate, and strategies for doing so. This will enable them to become confident in their ability to achieve well and persevere even when they encounter setbacks or when their goals are distant, and to respond calmly and rationally to setbacks and challenges. This integrated, whole-school approach to the teaching and promotion of health and wellbeing has a potential positive impact on behaviour and attainment. Our teaching should aim to reduce stigma attached to health issues, in particular those to do with mental wellbeing. The Maria Montessori School engenders an atmosphere that encourages openness. This means that children feel they can check their understanding and seek any necessary help and advice as they gain knowledge about how to promote good health and wellbeing. As a school we seek to work with the parents on all these issues because together, in partnership, we can hope to make a difference. For example nutrition and sleep are vital to a child's wellbeing and we would recommend to families that their child has a balanced diet, lots of exercise and adequate sleep – 10-13 hours for a 3-5 year old, 9-12 hours for a 6-12 year old.

Puberty including menstruation should be covered in Health Education and should, as far as possible, be addressed before onset. This should ensure all children are prepared for changes they and their peers will experience. The onset of menstruation can be confusing or even alarming for girls if they are not prepared. Children should be taught key facts about the menstrual cycle including what is an average period, range of menstrual products and the implications for emotional and physical health. In addition to curriculum content, our school should also make adequate and sensitive arrangements to help girls prepare for and manage menstruation including with requests for menstrual products. The Maria Montessori School will consider the needs of their cohort of pupils in designing this content.

The focus in our School should be on teaching the characteristics of good physical health and mental wellbeing. Teachers should be clear that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health. This starts with children being taught about the benefits and importance of



daily exercise, good nutrition and sufficient sleep, and giving children the language and knowledge to understand the normal range of emotions that everyone experiences. This should enable children to articulate how they are feeling, develop the language to talk about their bodies, health and emotions and judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate for the situations that they experience. Teachers should go on to talk about the steps children can take to protect and support their own and others' health and wellbeing, including simple self-care techniques, personal hygiene, prevention of health and wellbeing problems and basic first aid. Emphasis should be given to the positive two-way relationship between good physical health and good mental wellbeing, and the benefits to mental wellbeing of physical exercise and time spent outdoors. Children should also be taught the benefits of hobbies, interests and participation in their own communities. This teaching should make clear that people are social beings and that spending time with others, taking opportunities to consider the needs of others and practising service to others, including in organised and structured activities and groups are beneficial for health and wellbeing. Children should be taught about the benefits of rationing time spent online and the risks of excessive use of electronic devices. In the Elementary children should be taught why social media, computer games and online gaming have age restrictions and should be equipped to manage common difficulties encountered online. A firm foundation in the benefits and characteristics of good health and wellbeing will enable teachers to talk about isolation, loneliness, unhappiness, bullying and the negative impact of poor health and wellbeing.

By the end of Elementary children should know:

- that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health.
- that there is a normal range of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) and scale of emotions that all humans experience in relation to different experiences and situations.
- how to recognise and talk about their emotions, including having a varied vocabulary of words to use when talking about their own and others' feelings.
- how to judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate.
- the benefits of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation, voluntary and service-based activity on mental wellbeing and happiness.
- simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family and the benefits of hobbies and interests.
- isolation and loneliness can affect children and that it is very important for children to discuss their feelings with an adult and seek support.
- that bullying (including cyberbullying) has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing.



- where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), including whom in school they should speak to if they are worried about their own or someone else's mental wellbeing or ability to control their emotions (including issues arising online).

- it is common for people to experience mental ill health. For many people who do, the problems can be resolved if the right support is made available, especially if accessed early enough.



Internet safety and harms.

Children should know:

- that for most people the internet is an integral part of life and has many benefits.
- about the benefits of rationing time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.
- how to consider the effect of their online actions on others and know how to recognise and display respectful behaviour online and the importance of keeping personal information private.
- why social media, some computer games and online gaming, for example, are age restricted.
- that the internet can also be a negative place where online abuse, trolling, bullying and harassment can take place, which can have a negative impact on mental health.
- how to be a discerning consumer of information online including understanding that information, including that from search engines, is ranked, selected and targeted.
- where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online.

Physical health and fitness:

Children should know:

- the characteristics and mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle.
- the importance of building regular exercise into daily and weekly routines and how to achieve this; for example, walking or cycling to school, a daily active mile or other forms of regular, vigorous exercise.
- the risks associated with an inactive lifestyle (including obesity).
- how and when to seek support including which adults to speak to in school if they are worried about their health.

Healthy eating:

Children should know:

- what constitutes a healthy diet.



- the principles of planning and preparing a range of healthy meals.
- the characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating (including, for example, obesity and tooth decay) and other behaviours (e.g. the impact of alcohol on diet or health).

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco:

Children should know:

- the facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, alcohol use and drug-taking.

Health and prevention children should know:

- how to recognise early signs of physical illness, such as weight loss, or unexplained changes to the body.
- about safe and unsafe exposure to the sun, and how to reduce the risk of sun damage, including skin cancer.
- the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and that a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn.
- about dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene and dental flossing, including regular check-ups at the dentist.
- about personal hygiene and germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread and treated, and the importance of handwashing.
- the facts and science relating to allergies, immunisation and vaccination.

Basic first aid:

Children should know:

- how to make a clear and efficient call to emergency services if necessary.
- concepts of basic first-aid, for example dealing with common injuries, including head injuries.

Changing adolescent body:

Children should know:



- key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes.
- about menstrual wellbeing including the key facts about the menstrual cycle.

Maria Montessori School will consult parents before the final year of Elementary about the detailed content of what will be taught, if anything goes beyond the national curriculum for science. This process will include offering parents support in talking to their children about sex education and how to link it with what is being taught in school. We will always be aware that this process requires a graduated, age- appropriate programme of sex education, taking into account the developmental differences of children.

Assessment

The Maria Montessori School has the same high expectations of children's work in these areas as in any other area. The Government advice on Relationship Education informs our planning, as termly planning, and threading through our entire ethos as a School in which the well-being of the children and their families is of paramount importance. Presentations, Grace & Courtesies, groups, discussions and lessons are planned to ensure that children of different abilities including the most able are suitably challenged. Through our observation skills we will be able to ascertain if a child needs more or less support, including intervention, in achieving any of the goals set out in this policy. As these virtues and characteristics are the absolute fabric of a child we will take great care to offer endless opportunities to help each and every child achieve them.